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MUSIC.

REFLECTIONS IN A SUMMER GARDEN.

ALTHOUGH we have frequent occasion to remark the progress of our people in musical taste and culture, yet we are sometimes pained by the apathy which takes possession of them. Truly the great public is a fickle jade, and runs swiftly from old loves after fresh novelties. It seems almost unreal to chronicle that, while we write, serious fears are entertained that the unremitting work of Theodore Thomas is to be for a time interrupted, because there is not sufficient patronage at the Central Park Garden to enable him to hold his magnificent orchestra together for the season. We hope that this is not true, though we know that the proprietor of the garden succumbed to pressing engagements. This is a better phrase than "failed," and should be encouraged in these times when no business man knows how soon he may be carried down by his own or other men's misfortunes. If the disbandment shall come after these pages are in type, the reader may be assured that it is only temporary. Theodore Thomas is not easily discouraged. There is in him an abounding fund of obstinate, dogged perseverance, which having carried him through greater obstacles, will make him ride triumphant over this into the harbor of permanent musical and financial success.

How delightful it would be if this word "financial" could be left out of the calculation. Art seems to be dragged down from its high plane by unavoidable association with "filthy lucre." But sweet as is music and divinely spiritual, musicians have appetites; they suffer from heat and cold as do other mortals; their wants are numerous and their families usually large. So it comes to pass that when pay-day comes around and the exchequer is empty, the sound of the stringed instruments is heard no more in the land; the brass corni hide their shining faces, and the reeds, no longer blown by the wind, are as silent as "the harp that once thro' Tara's halls," or a decapitated drum.

It is a part of Mr. Thomas' varied experience that he has witnessed more than once the approach of that fell destroyer of his artistic hopes, a depleted treasury. The formation of a permanent orchestra which should rival the best European organizations has been the dream of his manhood. The impossibility of producing great works in a proper manner by an orchestra called together at intervals from the theatres, concert halls and beer gardens, is patent to every one. The venerable New York Philharmonic felt its own incapacity far more than did the half-tutored audiences which knew not and therefore sighed not for the worlds of music unexplored and unconquered. A perfect orchestra can not be made from such elements, unless they can be drawn altogether from the frivolities which the stage and the saloon demand, and held by a common bond to the constant practice in concert of the compositions of the great masters of the past, and the disputed geniuses of the present.

All this Mr. Thomas knew, and deplored the strange apathy of the people. But at last, after an unremunerative but persistent attempt to disseminate higher views by his classical *soirées*, he gathered his forces and opened an indirect attack upon the Philharmonic. The symphony concerts struggled hard at the outset. Fashion still covered the Philharmonic with the shadow of her banner, and the facile crowd followed listlessly after it. There was chattering in the boxes, and flirting all over the house, and the audiences dispersed, quite content with having been *seen* at the Philharmonic and had a good time. What the programme was or how well rendered, was of secondary importance. Nor did the orchestra itself seem to be particularly inspired. How could they, after three or four rehearsals on compositions which really required weeks of careful study and united practice?

The young conductor, facing frowns and discouragements on all sides, from the musical ring and a negligent public, kept steadily on his way. So long as there was a "shot in the locker," he refused "to give up the ship," and at last victory perched upon his standard. He has witnessed the steady decline of the old Philharmonic. The rumor has even reached his ears that the time-honored association proposes to pack its drums and viols, abandon the Academy, and march away to the new Chickering Hall.

Meantime he has watched with intense satisfaction the growth of musical culture, and the development of taste. How great an advance has been made, any one may discover by comparing the early programmes of Terrace Garden, where the summer concerts were first given with the Thomas orchestra, with those of the present day. Then light compositions preponderated. Strauss was highest in popular esteem, and there was plenty of Offenbach, and little or none of Sebastianbach. The crowd were attracted rather by the prospect of a social chat than any special desire to hear the music. But they had to listen a little, and soon Thomas began to introduce compositions of a higher grade. The progress was gradual; and when the change was made to the present location, or about that time, if we remember rightly, Thursday of each week was set apart as the classical evening. By common consent, the company assembled on these evenings listened attentively to the music. And what glorious programmes were presented on these matchless nights! Old works have received a new interpretation, disclosing beauties not before suspected; while Wagner and Liszt, the champions of the new school, have had a fair and constant hearing, and won their way to popular approval. New aspirants for musical fame have been accorded an opportunity to establish their claim for recognition; and no really meritorious work has been refused because its author was not widely known.

We prefer these classical evenings, not because the music on other evenings is not almost as attractive, but from the fact that when we go to hear a concert we like to hear the music, and when we want to drink beer and crack jokes, we go where it can be done without disturbing others who are musically inclined. So we strolled into the garden not long since, and this is the feast of good things which was spread for the enjoyment of the throng who were present: Overture, "Alceste," new (Glück); "Passacaglia," adapted for orchestra by H. Esser (Bach); Hungarian Dances, new (Hofmann); Selections from 3d act "Meistersinger von Nürnberg," (Wagner); Symphony No. 4 in F, "Consecration of Tones," (Spohr); "Rhapsodie Hongroise," No. 1 (Liszt); Romance, op. 40 in G, played by all the first violins (Beethoven); Turkish March (Mozart).

It was very delightful to hear the productions of those old fogies, Glück and Bach, in a summer garden. Despite the part they have

played in shaping the taste of the musical world, there has been danger that, on this side of the Atlantic at least, they might pass from the memory of the people, or worse than that, never be known so as to be forgotten. How many people know the reform effected in the modern opera by the genius of Glück? When he came into the world, in 1714, the opera was greatly degenerate. The Italian school, weak and frivolous, had almost full possession. It had even crept into the church, and threatened the destruction of all that was sacred in musical worship. Glück appeared, as if divinely sent, and stayed the tide of decline. The two "Iphigenias," "Orpheus" and "Alceste," are genuine tragedies, and are masterworks which the world can not afford to lose. But even Glück had a hard fight, and after a long and wearisome strife with Italian rivals, he attained immortality by dying in 1787.

We know the common impression of Bach's music is that it is very difficult and very tedious. People usually abuse that most of which they know the least. "Give a dog a bad name," etc., and every one assists in keeping it current. Bach is difficult, we know, but not always. There are hundreds of his compositions which are easily acquired by a fair performer. The real art-lover will find endless treasures in these, and their careful study forms the basis of the best school of composition.

But the programme speaks for itself, and we need not dwell longer upon it, but look rather to the causes which have led to the misfortunes of the garden, and the retirement of its proprietor. The lateness of the season had something to do with the diminished receipts. A garden is suggestive of warmth and comfort; but these came not for nearly a month later than usual.

The distance of the hall from the hotel-centre has undoubtedly affected the attendance; and it has certainly reduced the number of hearers from Brooklyn to a minimum. Were it in the vicinity of Fourteenth, or even of Twenty-third street, the audiences would be largely increased. The noise of brass and the jingle of glasses at the late Hippodrome, have drawn off that portion of the crowd which prefer the "free and easy" to music, and this is no loss in the long run. Their places will be filled by those who know how to appreciate music, and give it attention when properly played.

It is charged by some that the garden had become altogether "too high-toned"—a very grave complaint, forsooth—and unless there should be a return to the "free-and-easy-talk-all-the-time" style, the garden would not succeed. That is unfortunate, to be sure; but the fact is, Thomas' audience do not want to talk while his orchestra are playing. And this, after all, is the trouble; for the people have become so interested in the music, they won't interrupt the rendition by calls for beer, even. So while the audiences have been good, the drinking has been poor, and the receipts from that source have greatly suffered.

Meanwhile Gilmore lives, and marshals his hundred performers as we write, under the magic baton that led the Boston Jubilee on to financial and (worse still) musical failure. The Hippodrome performances are but the thing of the hour. They can never become popular with those who seek recreation and refreshment in music after the fatigue of business. They will be frequented, if continued after this year, largely by those who prefer whisky to Wagner, gin to Glück, brandy to Bach, and beer to Beethoven.

We have no fears for the result of Thomas' arduous struggle. The orchestra will be perpetuated. Already the Brooklyn Philharmonic is preparing for its reappearance the coming season, and a series of concerts more brilliant than ever is promised. We hear, too, of the approach of Hans von Bulow, and the retention of the same orchestra for his proper support. Add to these engagements the symphony concerts in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, etc., and the work of the winter is adequate to keep the orchestra intact. This will be good news to all; for Thomas' orchestra is an institution which we can not do without. It should command this season the heartiest support, and be placed on such a strong financial basis as to be beyond the reach of the summer gales which have threatened its destruction.

DRAMA.

SAPPHO THE LESBIAN, who had previously been for a long period relegated to the list of extremely enthusiastic and very unwise young women, incapable of the practical, raving over the inevitable, and "jumping the life to come" at the moment when continued life and persistent energy seemed the things most necessary—Sappho has recently sprung into a new and singular popularity through the widely different genius of two American women, who seem not quite to have outlived the mad folly of Leucadia. In other words, an American actress and an American authoress have been struggling to rehabilitate the suicide of the white cliff, with what we must designate as "energy worthy of a better cause," and with no small measure of rival success. Madame Guerrabella, well known a few years since as the most promising of American *prime donne*, but whose operatic career was so suddenly cut short by loss of voice in her hour of brightest promise—this lady some three years since resolved to undertake the cognate rôle of an actress, some of the most necessary qualities of which—especially tragic—she had shown upon the operatic stage. Throwing aside the Russian patent of nobility which had made the crowning romance of her young life, and which had undoubtedly cost her more of discomfort than it had ever brought her of pride—Madame at once showed her American derivation by commencing her dramatic studies, and making her trial appearances under her maiden name of Miss Genevieve Ward. As all who saw her in those trial appearances can testify, Miss Ward gave immense promise of success in her new career, especially when strongly tragic rôles were involved; and yet her warmest well-wishers could scarcely have anticipated the immediate and perfect success which has attended her in something more than a year of performances in the British Islands. Debarred at first from opportunities for the legitimate tragic, she raised into new prominence the worn-out part of *Marie de Lascours* in the "Sea of Ice," in a new version of that play called "The Prayer in the Storm," which for many months filled one of the London theatres to repletion. Since that time, she has budded into an enviable reputation in London, the provinces, and Ireland, in the widely different characters of *Portia*, *Pauline*, *Lucretia Borgia*, *Lady Macbeth*, *Medea*, *Thekla* (in Hon. Lewis Wingfield's "Despite the World"), etc. But it is alleged by some of the best critics that the highest of all her triumphs have

been won as *Sappho*, in a play of the same name, written for her by W. G. Wills, author of the successful "Charles I." There may be something of insular enthusiasm in the language employed in reference to her, as appearing in that character, by the Dublin *Mail*; but more than a little both of force and absolute genius must have been necessary to extort from that usually careful journal words like these: "With Miss Ward, we can go back with one bound and stand amid the Grecian peoples, and see everywhere the traces of passionate hearts and natures of a keenness unknown in our colder world. * * Never was attitude more touching or more true to nature than was Miss Ward's; never was a voice more laden with the despair of love. * * From the power which she manifests in expressing passion, jealousy, love and pathos, we can fairly say that Miss Genevieve Ward has fulfilled her promise, and stands the first tragic actress of the British stage." Only less pronounced is the commendation of the Manchester *Guardian*, which, after warmly indorsing several others of her renderings, says that "she is always far more powerful in the tragic than in the lighter scenes;" and that "above all, in her impersonation of the character of *Sappho*, in which she loses consciousness of herself, and rises above her sorrows in her artistic enthusiasm—in one and all of these scenes Miss Ward showed herself a finished and powerful actress." To which "An Old Play-Goer" in the Manchester *Examiner* of a later day, adds: "Let it further suffice to say of Miss Ward that for *Lady Macbeth*, *Hermione*, *Constance*, and the like, I know of no other actress who possesses so many qualifications of dramatic genius, high mental culture, and personal grace, on the English stage."

All concurrent testimony taken together, there can be no question of the marked triumph won by the American actress, or the culmination of that triumph in the rôle of *Sappho*, which, for modern audiences, she has enjoyed the absolute opportunity of creating. But here arises the complication which especially induced the notice of the actress and the character in this place. By a late mail comes to us from London, from the press of Trübner & Co., a printed tragedy, bearing a somewhat elaborate frontispiece of the Lesbian, after Huntington, and this title: "Sappho; a tragedy in five acts. By Stella, author of 'Records of the Heart,' 'The King's Stratagem,' or the Pearl of Poland,' etc." Dedicated to Madame Ristori as the "greatest living tragedienne," and dated 1875. In a slip accompanying the volume are two paragraphs suggesting the complication above referred to, and a probable "row" which may yet be inaugurated over the body of the long-drowned Lesbian. Following upon the announcement of copyright occurs first this notice: "Any person producing this tragedy or any version of it, obtained by short-hand or otherwise, without the author's permission, will be held amenable to the law." After which we read: "The author worked on this drama eight years; visited Mitylene and the Rock of Leucaté to perfect herself, as far as possible, in the legend. During the months of January and February, 1875, she read her play of 'Sappho' to Mr. E. Stirling, stage manager at Drury Lane, and paid him seven guineas for advice in the business of the piece. His praises of the beauty of the language and the originality of the ideas were unbounded."

Here is where we undoubtedly discern at once the complication before referred to, and the reviving popularity of the Lesbian. The second of the quoted paragraphs would unquestionably not have been printed in a fly-sheet, accompanying the book, but for a motive; and equally without question that motive can have but one aim. Most Americans know that "Stella" is the *nomme de plume* of Estelle Anna Lewis, an American authoress of a certain celebrity; and the motive for publication and putting forth in this form and with such an addendum at this juncture, can only be a mild desire of charging that Mr. Wills, in writing the "Sappho" played by Miss Ward, has more or less helped himself to material from the work of "Stella," assisted (also more or less) by a little treachery on the part of Manager Stirling.

We must defer any criticism of the published "Sappho" until a later period—possibly until ascertaining by the welcome coming of Miss Ward to this country in the autumn, what may be the resemblances and differences between the two works; but we do not hazard much in saying that the "fouling" (nautically) of the two pieces seems to promise, after the manner of Captain Marryat's triangular duel, what *Sir Lucius O'Trigger* would designate as "a very pretty quarrel as it stands."

Another very pretty quarrel is on the dramatic cards, and has, indeed, been so for a considerable period, though only now assuming shape and consistency. This is the "mill" between Dion Boucicault, with Joseph Jefferson as bottle-holder, and Robert McWade—over the right (or the wrong) to play certain portions of and do certain business contained in "Rip Van Winkle." Exactly what may be the merits of the difficulty it is not easy to discover; all that can be clearly known, is that Mr. Boucicault-Jefferson or Mr. Jefferson-Boucicault (the precedence is not too clear) claims copyright on something connected with the play, and objects to Mr. McWade appearing in it and using that indefinite something, while Mr. McWade fancies, or pretends that he fancies, that he has as good a right to use it as any other person or persons, party or parties whatsoever, be the same more or less. The delicate and integral beauty of all this is, that neither Mr. Boucicault (with Mr. Jefferson understood as an integer) nor Mr. McWade, has any more right to claim as his own, morally or legally, the whole or any part of a play called "Rip Van Winkle," the name and substance of which were both copyrighted by a predecessor some forty or fifty years ago, than he, she or it has to take possession of the corresponding name and substance of "Macbeth" or "Goody-Two-Shoes." Washington Irving wrote, in the idyll "Rip Van Winkle," a fragmentary story as incapable of being finished by any other hand, as would a frost fern on the window-pane be of completion by an engraver on glass. Mr. Boucicault has chosen to string on it some action and conversation, very effective, but by no means those of *Rip Van Winkle*; Mr. Jefferson has played them, on the original foundation, so well as to have made money and fame by the operation; and Mr. McWade, who plays the character even a trifle better than Mr. Jefferson, it seems, is to be stopped of his little "appropriation," as if for the very purpose of calling attention to the extent to which Irving has been inartistically added to in one direction, and shamelessly purloined from in another, by every one who has found time and opportunity to experiment upon him.